

# Oakland Tribune

## Santa Cruz council to allow marijuana in City Hall

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**Thursday, September 12, 2002** - Santa Cruz City Council members will stage their own Boston Tea Party next week by letting patients receive medical marijuana in a City Hall courtyard.

It is an act of defiance toward the federal government and its Drug Enforcement Administration, which one week ago raided the Wo/Men's Alliance for Medical Marijuana (WAMM), just north of Santa Cruz and about 60 miles south of San Francisco.

Riot-gear-clad agents toting assault rifles seized 167 marijuana plants and took WAMM co-founders Val and Mike Corral -- who helped write California's medical marijuana law -- into custody, but released them later the same day after federal prosecutors declined to file charges.

The federal government still deems all marijuana growth, possession or use illegal, even though California voters approved medical use in 1996. Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Hawaii, Maine, Oregon and Washington have similar laws.

The Corrals will dispense free marijuana to some of WAMM's 250 physician-screened patients at 3 p.m. Tuesday outside Santa Cruz's City Hall; council members will stand with them in solidarity.

"I'm shocked that the City Council would allow that to happen on their steps," Special Agent Richard Meyer, spokesman for the DEA's San Francisco office, said Wednesday. "I wonder what kind of message they want to send to our youth. Are they trying to tell youths and the rest of the U.S. that in Santa Cruz, you only have to obey the laws you like?"

Santa Cruz Mayor Christopher Krohn scoffed.

"Do they really think that medical marijuana is about the youth of America? I'm a teacher, and in my mind, it certainly isn't," he said.

It's about California voters' will that seriously ill patients have access to medicine that alleviates their symptoms and keeps them alive, Krohn said. That's why the City Council voted 6-0 for a resolution supporting WAMM this week, he said.

Meyer insisted the DEA will keep enforcing federal law. Asked whether it will act on Tuesday's event, he replied, "I won't be able to answer that question."

U.S. Rep. Maurice Hinchey, D-NY, wants to amend the Justice Department's funding bill to bar the DEA from conducting raids against medical marijuana facilities operating under state laws' protection. U.S. Rep. Sam Farr, D-Santa Cruz, and House Minority Whip Nancy Pelosi, D-San Francisco, have indicated their support.

And U.S. Rep. Mike Honda, D-San Jose, on Monday became the 38th co-sponsor of a bill to move marijuana off the federal government's list of most-restricted drugs. Of the Bay Area's representatives, only Ellen Tauscher, D-Alamo, and Richard Pombo, R-Tracy, have not become co-sponsors.